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TITLE: Soul Food, Brothers Healing Brothers: Towards a New HIV Prevention for Black Gay And Bisexual Men

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ISSUE: As the millennium approaches, primary HIV prevention for Black gay and bisexual men has relied essentially on risk reduction and risk elimination techniques as its foundation. Yet, HIV infections among black gay and bisexual men across the country continue to soar at an alarming rate. Are these interventions still viable twenty years later? What is the necessary paradigm shifts (i.e. a move from latex education to sex education) needed to address this discrepancy twenty years into the epidemic? Paradigm shifts have served as the foundation for the successful recreation of HIV prevention efforts targeting, gay men at Gay Men's Health Crisis in New York City. Soul Food, GMHC's HIV Prevention Program targeting Black gay and bisexual men, will be used as a model to explore how these paradigm shifts translate into programs.

SETTING: This discussion is sponsored by the tHIV Prevention Department at Gay Men 's Health Crisis in New York City and is intended for HIV Prevention service providers who target African-American gay and bisexual men.

PROJECT: Soul Food, funded in part through CDC initiative 704, is a unit of GMHC's HIV Prevention Department and was created by Black gay men with the goal of helping other Black gay and bisexual men and their partners remain HIV negative. Soul Food is a community mobilization effort that seeks to value and affirm the sexual lives of Black men.

RESULTS: Soul Food, as a result extensive outreach, has managed to enroll over 400 Black gay and bisexual men in New York City to participate in its prevention efforts. In addition to this, Soul Food's volunteers were responsible for collecting over 1,100 sexual health surveys on the sexual lives of Black gay and bisexual men across New York City, an unprecedented feat.

LESSONS: In the last three years, we have learned that targeting specific populations, valuing cultural affiliations, and building community are essential HIV prevention for Black gay and bisexual men; that Black gay and bisexual men can no longer afford to be just the object of HIV prevention efforts but the subject as well; that harm reduction as opposed to risk reduction is, a more viable approach to HIV prevention as it supports the complete individual and his social context; and that it is extremely important that Black gay and bisexual men have the ability to reduce rates of HIV infection in their neighborhoods and communities through increased support in building healthy relationships with themselves, their sexual partners, and their communities.

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